

New Documents on the Relations between the Latins and the Local Populations in the Black Sea Area (1392–1462)

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Among the series of documents of the Archivio Segreto in the State Archives of Genoa, the *Diversorum Filze* are not among the well studied. This loose collection of various papers, organized in files by years from the late fourteenth century onwards had the reputation of containing preliminary materials drafted for specialized commissions of the Ligurian republic. A total survey of the fund from 1375 to 1462 allowed me to make another conclusion, at least for the period indicated and for the documents concerning the Black Sea area.

We may begin with a formal statistical survey of documents in files 1 through 26. Every file consists of hundreds of documents, but within each file there are fewer than a dozen acts concerning the Black Sea zone. File 1 comprises papers from 1375 (systematically from 1392) to 1398, and the subsequent files include (without major intervals) acts from 1420 (no. 2) up to 1462 (no. 26). Among the 108 documents regarding Black Sea towns and settlements, 76 are supplications to the highest officials of Genoa, mostly with their verdicts, 10 are verdicts only, and another 3 include a protest, a testimonial, and a full protocol of a *procès-verbal*. Thus, 82.4 percent of all the documents are acts of civil law, mostly petitions. Another 19 papers include contracts for grain delivery (4), governmental decrees, mandates, and diplomas (11), letters (2), and financial obligations and confirmations of expenditures (2). Most of them are also connected with civil or real actions.

In 26 juridical documents, petitioners ask the doge or governor of Genoa and the Council of Wise Men to compensate their losses, to augment salaries, or to pay debts; 25 acts are demands to reduce or to determine taxes paid in Genoa by migrants from overseas territories; 18 cases are lawsuits concerning property in the settlements; 9 acts are claims to confer letters of marque and reprisal against foreign rulers (who caused damage to the Genoese); 7 documents treat the selling of or granting of overseas offices; 11 deal with actions against consuls of Caffa or with attempts to reexamine former condemnations of consuls pronounced by courts of syndicators; other papers concern different political and financial affairs and are closely connected with the duties of specialized committees.

It is interesting to follow the consequences of the petitions. Forty of them indicate compliance with a request; we do not know, however, the decisions of 5 acts; only 4 supplications were rejected, with 1 pending; 37 petitions were remitted for further examination by one or, rarely, more specialized commissions, such as the *Officium Provisionis Romanie* (15), *Officium Monete* (4), *Officium impensis/expensis ordinariis* (5), *Officium Mercantie* (2), or by the *vicarius* of the governor or doge and *podestà* of Genoa (8), the consul of Caffa (2), or special judges or law courts (5). The sluggishness and casuistry of medieval Genoese courts are well known. Yet, petitions addressed to even the highest officials were not a useless enterprise.

The documents of the *Diversorum Filze* depict life in the Genoese settlements of the Black Sea in regard to their relations with the outside world, including Byzantium and the empire of Trebizond. They match well and help to control evidence found in notarial acts and of the famous *massarias* of Caffa and Pera. We can trace the geographical preferences and economic priorities of Genoese men of affairs in the Black Sea area. Eighty-seven documents deal with Caffa, the center of the Genoese "Gazaria." All other settlements and Black Sea towns are named more rarely: Cembalo (Balaklava), 7 cases; Trebizond, 6; Soldaia (Sudak, Sugdaia), 5; Simisso (Samsun), Moncastro (Bielgorod on the Dniester, Cetatea Alba), Lerice/Illice, 4; Tana (Azov), 3; Coppa (in the estuary of the Kuban'), Theodoro (Mangoup), Solhat (Staryj Krim), Sinope, Samastro (Amasra), 2; Herakleia Pontica (Eregli), Vatiza (Fatsa), Sultania, Kalamita (near Sevastopol), many small ports of the eastern Crimea and northwestern Caucasus, like Matrega (Tmutarakan', Taman'), Vosporo (Kerch), Cavallari (Nymphaeum), and so on, once. More distant territories, such as Poland, Georgia, Lithuania, and Wallachia, are also mentioned once. As a whole, northern Black Sea towns are referred to 110 times; southern shore settlements, 16 times; eastern and western coasts, 10 times each. So, during this period the major activity of the Genoese was centered in the northern part of the Mare Maius, mostly in or around Caffa. Parallel series of documents in the State Archives of Venice, *Giudici di Petizion*, for the same period clearly show other priorities: Tana and Trebizond. Would it be more accurate to speak of a division of spheres of interests of the two maritime republics after the war of Chioggia (1378–81) rather than of Genoese domination in the Black Sea or even in its northern part?

Twenty-six cases in the *Diversorum Filze* concern decisions, supplications, or claims for compensation of losses, debts, and expenses of officials in the settlements. Data confirm the financial difficulties of Caffa and other settlements, their budget deficit well known already owing to the *massarias* of Caffa. Political and economic instability caused a flow of Italians and other inhabitants of the Black Sea settlements—Greeks, Armenians, and Jews—to Genoa, Liguria, or Chios.

Initially people went to Caffa or Tana hoping to improve their economic position. *Thomas de Ferrariis, phisicus*, not in a grade to pay taxes in Genoa and maintain his family, went to Caffa as a doctor (*pro medico*), leaving his wife in charge of his mother. For many years, he earned his livelihood in Caffa *ad iornatam* (at everyday work), but his family in Genoa remained in dire condition (*in maxima egestate*), and eventually asked for release from paying *avaria* (personal duty).¹ Lorenzo di Camporotondo, *civis* of Genoa, passed

¹Archivio di Stato di Genova, Archivio Segreto, *Diversorum Filze* (hereafter DF), 3022, N 220: 31/III 1424.

seven years in Simisso and lost all of his property there when the Genoese castle was burnt and destroyed by the Turks in 1422. He returned to Genoa poor.² Oberto Garroni passed twenty years of his life in Romania as a sailor and merchant; he was robbed by Zichs and Tartars and lost all his property in Tana ca. 1416. In 1417 he returned home, to Rivarolo, where he was not very welcomed by his neighbors.³ Pietro Giovanni Leca-vello, who went, like *Thomas de Ferrariis*, from Genoa to Caffa, leaving in the Ligurian capital his wife and family, fell in need and could not pay *avaria* in Genoa.⁴ Battista Imperiale, an offspring of a most noble clan, had to accept a consulate of Cembalo, which he considered not worthy of his dignity and social status (*quod non erat officium pro suo honore, neque pro suo statu*). He was obliged to do so by poverty (*ad inopiam*) and the necessity to support his family.⁵ Some emigrants were more fortunate, but yet many longed to return home. The main obstacle, however, for *burgenses* and *habitatores* of Caffa and other settlements wishing to return to Genoa was the heavy duties they had to pay there, especially on immovables, poll taxes, and obligatory loans to the commune. The phrase *pauper et inops* is used frequently in the petitions of Ligurians wanting to return to Genoa, but who were not in a grade to pay taxes. Therefore, many Genoese who passed dozens of years in the Black Sea towns asked the governors of Genoa, through their relatives or directly, to permit them not to pay taxes for previous, current, and some years to come, or to make a special arrangement for reduced taxation for five to ten years.⁶ Among these immigrants was Michael from Tana, the owner of a small *hospes* at Sancta Magdalena and, probably, a Greek;⁷ he is named by location, rather than by a patronymic as was the usual case for the Genoese. Overseas, in Caffa, Pera, Chios, and elsewhere, the Genoese, *burgenses* of these places, had to pay only local and commercial taxes, but not the Genoese *avarías*, which were much higher.⁸

Eighteen acts reflect trials among businessmen of Genoa concerning properties in the Black Sea area. Such cases could drag on for decades and frequently were initiated after the death of respondents against their heirs, against whom claims were lodged to pay off real or supposed debts. It is interesting however, that we do not find cases brought against Greeks, Armenians, or other natives of the Genoese settlements. These cases were judged *in situ* and were not brought to the higher, supreme courts of Genoa. They remained internal affairs and rarely became matters of scandal that had to be settled in the metropolis. Actions against Genoese officials in the Crimea and local rulers were common.

The Genoese administration had a solid reputation for being a most corrupt one; even the fall of Caffa has been explained by the degeneration of its ruling class and the consulship.⁹ There are, however, facts that can lead to a slightly different interpretation.

²DF, 3022, N 342: 1/XII 1424.

³DF, 3024, N 342 (163): 21/IV 1428.

⁴DF, 3027, N 239: 5/VI 1433.

⁵DF, 3024, N 29: 10/III 1427.

⁶DF 3024, NN 29, 163; 3025, N 78; 3026, N/n (no number): 4/VIII 1431; 3028, NN 26, 219; 3036, N 286; 3038, NN 247, 329, 333; 3046, N 192.

⁷DF, 3027, N 410: 21/VIII 1433.

⁸DF, 3039, NN 291, 386bis.

⁹Cf. G. Pisarino, *Genovesi d'Oriente* (Genoa, 1990), 479–518; R. Ph. Kressel, *The Administration of Caffa under the Uffizio di San Giorgio* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1966), 146.

It is well known that according to the Genoese laws and statutes of Caffa that all the highest officials on the expiration of their terms of office had to undergo a special public procedure or *sindacamento* (a process overseen by judges appointed by their successors). The investigators accepted any kind of claim against the ex-official, and the court of syndicators could condemn him to pay high fines for actions considered illegal. We have at our disposal six appeals to reexamine the sentences of syndicators against consuls of Caffa, their vicars, and advisors,¹⁰ and three to convict former consuls of Caffa.¹¹ Let us now investigate some of these cases.

Manfredo Sauli was the consul of Caffa during 1420–21; the end of his consulate coincided with the passage of Genoa to the rule of the duke of Milan (1421–35). Possibly this was the reason Sauli was badly treated by his four syndicators. Only in 1442 could the curator of his property submit a supplication to the doge, in this case Tomaso di Campofregoso (1415–21, 1436–42), the same man who appointed Sauli so many years before. During Sauli's consulate, Caffa was in a most precarious situation; it suffered from hunger. Sauli, therefore, sent ships to different parts of the Black Sea in order to buy and retrieve grain. One contract was stipulated with Giovanni di Santo Donato, who obliged himself to sail to Coppa. Instead, the shipowner went with his boat to Trebizond without any regard to the needs of his fatherland (*spreta necessitate patrie . . . et illius miserabilis populi*). At that time, Genoa's conflict with the Grand Comnenes of Trebizond was not entirely solved¹² and, possibly, Caffa observed *devetum* for her ships to sail to Trebizond. Sauli fined Giovanni 100 sommi, but later his syndicators punished him for that decision. Another of his actions is even more interesting. A Greek named Papa Costa was seized by the "emperor" of the Golden Horde, but managed to escape. A Tartar, charged by the khan to guard the Greek, fled to Caffa in fear of reprisal and adapted Christianity. The consul, after consultations, decided to give the Tartar back to the khan, appealing for his mercy; he wanted to avoid a conflict with the Golden Horde, while, as we recall, Caffa badly needed food supplies. Sauli pointed out also that the baptism of the Tartar was not voluntary, but forced. The syndicators condemned Sauli, levying a heavy fine on him.¹³ Yet, there is a question: did Genoese lawyers provide recourse against corruption and abuses by high officials, or were they simply concerned with particular interests? In any case, they took into consideration the relations of the Latins with the local Greek and Tartar populations.

Another nobleman, Franco Lomellini, was the consul of Caffa during 1431–32. On 8 October 1431, he was informed by his subaltern, the consul of Soldaia, that two Venetian galleys were shipwrecked near Cape Meganom. All the goods and properties of Genoa's rival were collected by Lomellini, although not without difficulty, and turned over to the treasury of Caffa; it was an episode in the larger Genoese-Venetian conflict.¹⁴ In response,

¹⁰DF, 3026, N 43; 3032, NN 236, 261; 3033, N 122; 3036, N/n: 13/V 1446; 3037, N 24.

¹¹DF, 3025, N 127; 3026, N/n: 18/I 1431; 3035, N/n: 12/X 1444.

¹²Cf. S. P. Karpov, *L'impero di Trebisonda, Venezia, Genova e Roma, 1204–1461: Rapporti politici, diplomatici e commerciali* (Rome, 1986), 157–58, 185 n. 110.

¹³DF, 3033, N 122: 28/X 1442.

¹⁴Cf. F. Depuigrenet Desroussilles, "Vénitiens et Génois à Constantinople et en mer Noire en 1431," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 20.1 (1979), 111–22; V. Vasiliu, "Sur la seigneurie de 'Tedor' en Crimée au XVe siècle à l'occasion d'un nouveau document," *Mélanges de l'Ecole roumaine en France* 1 (1929), 306–8.

and at an unusual time, on 24 December 1431, Venetian ships seized some Genoese galleys close to the shores of the “Genoese” Crimea (*in nostra ripparia*).¹⁵ All this caused panic in Caffa and other settlements, with the council in Caffa deciding to spend money from the confiscated goods on defense. Still, in eight months’ time, the Genoese government, which had evidently treated with Venice, asked Lomellini to send money to Genoa. He could not do it and was fined 50 sommi. Did he exceed his authority? The petition had to be examined by the *Officium Romanie* of Genoa.¹⁶

A different case is the supplication of Gabriele de’Mari. The consul of Caffa, Teodoro Fieschi (1441–42), made Gabriele give a horse to Fieschi’s son, who had been sent to govern the consulate of Soldaia. Neither the horse, nor its price—50 ducats—were returned to Gabriele afterwards.¹⁷ All the same, officials lost more than they gained. Dario Grillo in 1430 was an ambassador of Caffa to the great duke of Lithuania, Witold (Vitautas). Grillo had been sent to settle difficult affairs, including rejecting the claims of the duke to put Caffa under his direct authority. On the way there, Grillo was robbed by people of the “emperor” of the Tartars, and lost money, horses, and goods—he intended also to trade there—totaling 300 sommi, the equivalent of 2,400 Genoese liras. The only way to reimburse him was to give him a post in overseas administration with respectable revenues. He was offered a consulate of Cembalo, but it was not adequate, and one *massaria* of Caffa for eighteen months was added later. Another possible way to repay him was to let him collect a special tax (*drictus*) on goods brought by Tartars to Caffa. He had to wait quite some time for satisfaction and suitable offices.¹⁸ Cembalo in that time was not the best place to extract profits. Antonio *de Pinu*, who governed there for nearly a year and managed to settle disagreements among the population (Greek and Latin) suffered a loss of 34,300 aspers, or approximately 170 sommi.¹⁹

One common way to compensate for debts and losses—to reward those who offered special services to the republic—was, as we already know, to grant a post in the administration of a Black Sea settlement. It became a regular practice in the fifteenth century,²⁰ as did the formerly forbidden purchase of magistratures.²¹ Sometimes an official could also acquire additional personal privileges. In 1393 Antonio d’Olliverio was elected *masarius* of Caffa with a salary of 2 sommi monthly. In return for his former services, he was granted permission to enlist one of his servants, provided he was a skilled archer, as a stipendiary of the commune of Caffa with a salary of 1 sommo a month.²² In 1425 another archer, Luca Musca, *burgensis* of Soldaia, asked that his salary be augmented from

¹⁵The news had already been received in Genoa in January 1432. V. Vasiliu dates the event to autumn 1431 (“Sur la seigneurie,” 309). Our document gives the exact date of the event—24 December 1431: DF, 3037, N 24.

¹⁶DF, 3037, N 24: 12/II 1448.

¹⁷DF, 3035, N/n: 12/X 1444.

¹⁸DF, 3034, NN 6, 140: 14/I and 26/VIII 1443.

¹⁹DF, 3034, N 181: 25/X 1443.

²⁰DF, 3023, NN 5, 202 (a *scribania* in Caffa); 3024, N 88 (offices of the captain of burghs in Caffa and consulate in Samastro); N 137 (consulate in Coppa and a *castellania* in Famagusta); N 150 (consulate of Trebizond); 3036, N/n: 23/V 1446 (unnamed offices for 250 sommi). Cf. also E. Basso, “La colonizzazione genovese nel Mar Nero nel tardo medioevo: aspetti etnici e sociali,” *I problemi del Mar Nero nel passato e nel presente: Seminario int. di studi. Atti. Genova, 16 giugno 1992*, ed. Geo Pistarino (Genoa, 1993), 43.

²¹DF, 3024, N 150; 3031, N 83; 3042, N 49 (consulate of Cembalo).

²²DF, 3021, N 77: 22/XII 1393.

150 aspers to the same amount, 1 sommo, in consideration of his skill and experience and the fact that he was *magister ballistariorum* and repaired crossbows.²³

Documents of the *Diversorum Filze* show us a complicated situation in the Black Sea area. Hunger or shortages of food supplies are attested in Caffa in 1393/94,²⁴ 1420/21, and 1456.²⁵ Grain had to be brought from Sicily and eastern Black Sea ports. Plague spread in the Crimea in 1435; people tried to escape from Caffa to Moncastro and elsewhere.²⁶ Some social conflicts can be traced (but, unfortunately, they are mentioned only in passing). For instance, minor friars deprived the bishop of Soldaia, Lodovico, of his cathedral, notwithstanding disapproval of the act by the pope himself. In order to have his rights restored, Lodovico had to petition the archbishop of Milan, the governor of Genoa, and his council.²⁷ Disorder in Caffa (*diversitates civitatis*) in 1436/37 made it impossible to collect certain taxes there.²⁸ Troubles in Cembalo in 1439 demanded extraordinary measures *pro salvacione loci Cimbali*; the document mentions *dissensio ortarum* and *discordie* in Cimbalo.²⁹ Definitely it was a continuation of events that took place in 1433–34, when the Greeks of Cembalo went over to the prince of Theodoro, Alexius, and refused to recognize Genoese authority. It led to the famous expedition of Carlo Lomellini against Cembalo, Theodoro, and, later, Solhat.³⁰ The campaign of Lomellini is mentioned in many documents. One of them tells, for instance, of an unknown treaty of Lomellini with Sinope, of his embassy to Trebizond, of the possible bribing of his envoy by the emperor,³¹ and of the tragic defeat at Solhat. A petitioner, Antonio *de Pumexana*, a scribe of books, participated in that unfortunate battle, lost all of his property and his weapons, was wounded, and barely escaped.³²

Other maritime enterprises are also documented in the *Diversorum Filze*—such as the Burgundian Crusade of 1445 headed by Walerin de Wavrin, which turned out to be nothing but piracy and the cause of conflicts between Genoa and the commanders of the fleet in the Black Sea,³³ and such as the raids of the fleets of Caffa against the empire of Trebizond in 1417³⁴ and the principality of Theodoro in 1438.³⁵ The prince of Mangoup, Alexius, was inclined more and more toward the side of the Venetians. The Genoese intercepted a letter addressed to him by a Venetian *bailo* in Constantinople (1442/43), a

²³DF, 3023, N 106: 15/XI 1425.

²⁴DF, 3021, N 81: 4/II 1394.

²⁵DF, 3033, N 122; 3042, N 43.

²⁶DF, 3029, N 153; 3030, N 165.

²⁷DF, 3025, N 182: 4/II 1429.

²⁸DF, 3035, N 10: 18/I 1445.

²⁹DF, 3034, N 181: 25/X 1443.

³⁰Cf. A. Agosto, "Nuovi reperti archivistici genovesi dell' 'Officium Provisionis Romanie' sulla guerra di Cembalo (1434)," *Byzantinobulgarica* 7 (1981), 103–8; S. Papacostea, "Une révolte antigénoise en mer Noire et la riposte de Gênes (1433–1434)," *Il Mar Nero* 1 (1994), 270–90.

³¹DF, 3032, NN 71, 261; 3033, N 249; 3036, N 173; 3037, N 233.

³²DF, 3028, N 262: 24/III 1435; 3029, N 215: 18/IV 1437.

³³DF, 3035, N 213; 3038, N 23. Cf. for details J. Paviot, "'Croisade' bourguignonne et intérêts génois en mer Noire au milieu du XVe siècle," *Studi di Storia Medievale e di Diplomatica* 12–13 (1992), 135–62; idem, "Comment avoir justice des dommages subis en mer Noire au XVe siècle," *Publication du Centre européen d'études bourguignonnes (XIVe–XVIe s.)* 30 (1990), 117–25; idem, "La piraterie bourguignonne en mer Noire à la moitié du XVe siècle," *Horizons marins, itinéraires spirituels (Ve–XVIIIe s.)*, II (Paris, 1987), 203–14.

³⁴DF, 3031, N 101: 27/IV 1439. Cf. for the episode, Karpov, *L'impero*, 157–58.

³⁵DF, 3035, N 166.

copy of which is now among the documents of the *Diversorum Filze*.³⁶ Amid information about prices on hides, and the successes of the Hungarians in the war with the Turks, the letter, in a veiled form, informs the prince about his Genoese neighbors. The *bailo* promises Alexius to inquire in Venice about his demand to send him poisoned sweets, on condition that they be used only against infidels. The alliance between Venice and the Greek principality of Theodoro, which held the port of Kalamita just near Cembalo, troubled Genoa and Caffa.

Relations with the Turks and the Tartars became more and more important for the Genoese in this situation. Genoa surely wished to avoid any open military conflict with them. Even when Tartars and Zichs ca. 1417 robbed all the property of Oberto Garroni in Tana, no restitution of damages was made or even demanded up to 1428.³⁷ While in 1423 the governor (*subashi*) of Samsun confiscated the property of a Genoese merchant who died there, the administration of Genoa preferred to satisfy his heirs not by conceding to them the right of reprisal over the Turks nor through introducing a special charge on their goods in Caffa, but by giving him an office with an income equal to the damage. It was explained simply: granting reprisal could be dangerous for the people of Caffa.³⁸

The right of marque was a diffuse practice in the fifteenth century. The Genoese authorities granted it only in rare instances from 1420 onwards, but their own merchants seemed to be victims of it. When some Genoese of Caffa, disregarding the regulations of the statutes, appropriated the goods of Turks in Moncastro, the Turks did the same immediately toward an innocent merchant in Gallipoli, Luca Saccherio. Saccherio asked for the right of reprisal, but it was preferred to study the case attentively in conformity with the *leges et constitutiones Caphe*.³⁹ Practically the same thing occurred when the Genoese of Pera confiscated goods of a *civis* of Lvov, a town belonging then to the kingdom of Poland.⁴⁰

Reprisals were claimed by the Genoese also against the prince of Wallachia, Stephen, who had confiscated the property of the brothers Giustiniani, worth a total of 4,500 ducats;⁴¹ against the subjects of the Georgian king Alexander I (1412–43);⁴² and, especially, against the rulers of Sinope⁴³ and of the empire of Trebizond. These reprisals reflected the increase in violence and piracy during this period. John IV, Grand Comnene of Trebizond, ordered, for instance, the seizure of a boat of a *civis* of Caffa, Mervaldo Spinola, in 1437. This was performed in Vati (Batumi) by military galleys of Trebizond, commanded by a Genoese, *megas mesazon* of the emperor, Girolamo di Negro.⁴⁴

Yet, the Genoese provided effective measures against pirates. The most ferocious pirates, the Catalans, did not penetrate the Black Sea, but ships captured earlier by them

³⁶DF, 3040, N/n, no date. Publication and commentaries in Vasiliu, "Sur la seigneurie," 318–24, 335–36. The Rumanian scholar justly attributed the document to 1442/43 and locates the document as Archivio Segreto, busta 2774A (i.e., Materie Politiche), but now it is in busta 3040.

³⁷DF, 3024, N 163: 21/IV 1428.

³⁸DF, 3028, N 276: 27/IV 1435.

³⁹DF, 3037, N 73: 7/IV 1449.

⁴⁰DF, 3036, N 50: 11/III 1446.

⁴¹DF, 3035, N/n: 23/XII 1443.

⁴²DF, 3037, N 233: 15/II 1449.

⁴³DF, 3027, N 66; 3032, N 71.

⁴⁴DF, 3033, N/n: 19/V 1441; N 58: 28/III 1442; 3038, N 49: 5/III 1450 (We have here clear evidence that Vati belonged then to the empire of Trebizond.)

in the Aegean were sometimes sold anew or restored to former owners, including the inhabitants of Caffa.⁴⁵ The Caffiots were good pirates themselves. For instance, *Baxilius de Caffa*, evidently a Greek, having Greek warrantors from Chios, the owner of a brigantine, robbed a Sicilian, Andrea Teuforte, without any regard to a *salvum conductum*, given to him by the Genoese government.⁴⁶ The naval war between the Spinola and the Fregoso clans also caused confiscations of goods transported from Caffa or owned by the Caffiots.⁴⁷

Notwithstanding such difficulties, Caffa remained an important Mediterranean port. Ships, led by the Caffiots, went to Genoa⁴⁸ and back, to Flanders (in 1430/31),⁴⁹ Marseilles,⁵⁰ Chios,⁵¹ and elsewhere.⁵² At least Caffa and Cembalo possessed arsenals, and big two-deckers were built there.⁵³ All this provided real possibilities for naval operations against enemies. Realizing the importance of Caffa in ecclesiastical matters, as well as in economic and political affairs, Genoa asked the pope to install in Caffa an archbishopric instead of an episcopacy.⁵⁴

Two kinds of trade are notable in the *Diversorum Filze*, that of grain and that of slaves. Regarding grain traffic,⁵⁵ we find four contracts of the late fourteenth century. Three of them are obligations to bring different kinds of grain from the Black Sea regions to Genoa⁵⁶ and one to bring it from Sicily to Caffa during the period of crop failure.⁵⁷ Much later, the Caffiots undertook grain traffic as far away as Marseilles and, occasionally, suffered losses.⁵⁸

Slaves from the Black Sea were imported to the West in large quantities: only once in Gallipoli did the Turks appropriate the slaves, twelve of them, of a single Ligurian merchant. He sailed from Caffa to Genoa.⁵⁹ Another tradesman, Nicolo Ratonì, embarked five slaves in Caffa in 1433 to bring them to Pera: Abkhasians, Mingrelians, and Russians ranging from 15 to 30 years of age. He, too, was unlucky. Trying to avoid meeting with Venetian galleys ready to enter the Black Sea, the patron of his ship made a mooring in Herakleia Pontica. Ratonì took a bark from there to Pera, but all his goods

⁴⁵DF, 3023, N 251: 22/XI 1426.

⁴⁶DF, 3024, N 100: 16/X 1427.

⁴⁷DF, 3026, N 205: 26/IV 1431.

⁴⁸DF, 3036, N 85; 3043, N/n: 1459/60.

⁴⁹DF, 3026, N 334.

⁵⁰DF, 3037, N/n: 4/VIII 1449.

⁵¹DF, 3043, N/n: 1459/60.

⁵²Cf. also G. G. Musso, *Navigazione e commercio genovese con il Levante nei documenti dell'Archivio di Stato di Genova (Secc. XIV–XV)* (Rome, 1975).

⁵³DF, 3021, NN 85, 109.

⁵⁴DF, 3026, N 296: 4/VII 1431.

⁵⁵Cf. S. Origone, "L'Officium victualium a Caffa nella prima metà del secolo XV," *Bulgaria Pontica*, II (Sofia, 1988), 398–426; idem, "L'amministrazione genovese a Caffa nel secolo XV," *Saggi e documenti*, III (Genoa, 1983), 229–318; M. Balard, "Le commerce du blé en mer Noire (XIIIe–XVe siècles)," *La mer Noire et la Romanie génoise (XIIIe–XVe siècles)* (London, 1989), art. vi, 64–80; S. P. Karpov, "The Grain Trade in the Southern Black Sea Region: The Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 8.1 (1993), 55–73.

⁵⁶DF, 3021, NN 29: 13/III 1392, 85: 26/III 1395, 109: 7/VI 1395.

⁵⁷DF, 3021, N 81: 4/II 1394.

⁵⁸DF, 3037, N/n: 4/VIII 1449.

⁵⁹DF, 3037, N 73: 7/IV 1449.

and slaves were appropriated by a Turkish *subassi* of a small place near Pera called Bosilli. That *subassi*, Musa Bey, acted on the suggestion of an ex-Christian who had converted to Islam, *Manuel Grimagni (olim cristicole et nunc saraceni et nominabatur Acomacho)*.⁶⁰ The slave trade associated with Caffa is mentioned in passing in other documents.⁶¹ We find real detective stories about slaves from the Black Sea. One of them, a 32-year-old Zich, escaped from his owner in Genoa, Therami Lomellini, to a castle in Serravalle. The viscount of Serravalle, Franco Assereto, was not inclined to deliver him up to his owner and it nearly caused a feudal war in Liguria.⁶² A Circassian maid, Magdalena, slave of the Stella family, fled with a monk, *frater Albertus*, to Ferrara. The couple lived there for several months, notwithstanding the vain protests of the Genoese government (surely taking care not so much out of morality as for the rights of owners) to the marquis of Ferrara.⁶³

The *Diversorum Filze* provide us with extremely valuable data on administration, law, trade, and political events in the Italian Black Sea settlements. Yet, they are definitely poor in material about interrelations between the Genoese and the local populations. Why? Is it the nature of our sources or does it reflect the real situation, when certain *strata* were socially isolated, notwithstanding their economic and personal contacts and proximity of living? Surely we have here an obvious epistemological limit. It can be, I hope, overcome by a detailed analysis of the *massarias* of Caffa, Greek account books, and other sources. Still, we will never know as much about Pontic Greeks as about Pontic Latins of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

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⁶⁰DF, 3028, N 231: 3/VII 1435.

⁶¹DF, 3025, N 78; 3026, N 334, etc.

⁶²DF, 3040, N 263: 20/I 1452.

⁶³DF, 3034, N 51: 13/III 1443.